

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Terre Haute Man Faces 15 Years in Prison After Pleading Guilty to Possession of a Firearm by a Convicted Felon**

Urbana, IL - Rodger A. Heaton, United States Attorney for the Central District of Illinois, announced that James Ray Piker, age 63, of Terre Haute, Indiana agreed to a term of 15 years of federal imprisonment in making his plea of guilty on Friday, October 16, 2006, to the charge of being a felon in possession of a firearm.

Piker was arrested on March 1, 2004, in Paris, Edgar County, Illinois, following a traffic stop by the Paris, Illinois Police Department. During an inventory search of the pick up truck driven by Piker, Paris police officers discovered a loaded 45 mm. semi-automatic handgun and ammunition near the driver seat of the truck. During a court appearance on Friday, October 16, 2006, Piker admitted to U.S. Chief District Judge Michael P. McCuskey that he was a convicted felon when he possessed the 45 caliber firearm on March 1, 2004.

Piker has previous convictions of at least three drug trafficking offenses or violent felonies; therefore, Piker is subject to a term of federal imprisonment ranging from a minimum term of 15 years of imprisonment to a term of life imprisonment. In a negotiated plea agreement accepted by Judge McCuskey, Piker and the U.S. Attorney's office agreed to a term of 15 years imprisonment in the Federal Bureau of Prisons stemming from this charge. Following his release from federal prison, Piker will be placed on three years of supervised release.

Sentencing is set for January 19, 2007, at 3:30 p.m. At sentencing, if the Court does not accept the stipulated term of 15 years of imprisonment, Piker's guilty plea will be withdrawn.

The charge is the result of an investigation under the Project Safe Neighborhoods program by the Paris Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Assistant U.S. Attorney David H. Hoff is prosecuting the case.

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